

F 124

S 98

copy 2



THE  
  
POLITICAL SITUATION,  
  
RESULTING FROM THE  
  
LATE STATE ELECTION.

---

[HERALD INTERVIEW WITH PETER B. SWEENEY.]

---

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9

PUBLISHED BY  
  
THE JACKSON ASSOCIATION.

[ 1898 ]

F124  
.S98  
copy 2

81504

655

## CENTRAL JACKSON ASSOCIATION.

---

AT a meeting of this Association, held at Tammany Hall, Nov. 27th inst., the following resolution was unanimously adopted, viz. :

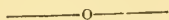
*Resolved*, That we emphatically indorse and approve the views expressed by PETER B. SWEENEY, as published in the *Herald* of yesterday, and direct that the same be printed in pamphlet form, for distribution, under the direction of the officers of the Association.

JOSEPH H. TOOKER,  
*President.*

HENRY A. SMITH,  
*Secretary.*

655

# THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY.



(From *The New York Herald* of Nov. 26th, 1869.)

## PETER B. SWEENY'S HOROSCOPE.

*The Political Situation, State and National—The Presidential Policy Analyzed—The "Eric Bill"—Municipal Reconstruction and Reform—Police, Excise, and Labor Movements—A General Swinging Round the Political Circle.*

As a great deal of speculation and considerable doubt exist in the minds of all classes of this city and State as to what the Democracy will do with their late great accession of political fortune in matters of State policy, municipal reconstruction for the Empire City, and on the local questions relating to the Excise, Police, and Fire departments, and other State-appointed boards, the HERALD, anxious to lay before its readers the earliest and most reliable information on the subject, yesterday sent a reporter to interview the great Peter Bismarck Sweeny, the chief of the new Tammany Regency. Our reporter made his way to the headquarters of the chief, the Chamberlain's office, in the new Court House. He states that he found the ante-room leading to the sanctum crowded with the

political candidates who are contesting the coming charter election, and their chief friends and supporters, and with many others politically interested in State matters and in the local political questions of the day. The inner room, or sanctum itself, was also filled with the higher class of local leaders, all intent on imparting information or receiving instruction and advice. A momentary glance of his sharp and brilliant eye satisfied the great Peter B. that our reporter was not a candidate for office or a claimant for place, and he immediately moved to his side, and in a low voice peculiar to his manner of speaking, but pleasing and musical withal, inquired our reporter's business. Telling him where he hailed from and the object of his visit—being to "interview" him, and to ask a few questions with regard to the policy to be adopted at Albany in the coming session of the Legislature—Mr. Sweeny very blandly inquired why he of all the leaders should be appealed to for such information. Why not, he said, have called on Senator Tweed, Mayor Hall, or Comptroller Connolly? Our reporter's modesty forbade him to indulge in any very complimentary strain in answer to this query; but he said enough to draw a smile from the lips and an extra twinkle from the bright eyes of the Tammany chief, which was almost an assurance that his request for the interview would be granted. Mr. Sweeny, however, did not at once

yield the compliance that his look and smile had promised. He said: "But, my dear Mr. Reporter, I am averse to giving any views of my own on the political situation for publication, though the HERALD would certainly be selected by me as the medium of publishing such views if they possessed any importance, or were of any value to the readers of the HERALD." Here was an opportunity that even reportorial modesty could not overlook, and with a confident smile our reporter begged to assure Mr. Sweeny that no other of the leaders of the party could furnish any information near so valuable as he himself could. With another of his blandest smiles and a still brighter twinkle of the eye, Mr. Sweeny succumbed to the compliment. He said: "Well, then, call again at three P. M., and I will endeavor to make time for you to interview me till you get all the information you seek, so far as I can give it to you. But," he continued, "you must not connect my name with what you publish, but give the matter as the statements of a Democrat, and let the information go for what it is worth." Our reporter did not specially agree to this, but hurried from the presence before a pledge was asked from him.

At the appointed time our reporter returned to the sanctum of the chief, and still found him busily engaged with the ever coming and moving crowds of politicians. He at once cleared himself of the

importunate applicants and office-seekers, and, beckoning to our reporter, left the lower office and repaired to a private room on the floor above. This is Mr. Sweeny's retreat when he holds councils with the more trusted and talented leaders of the party. The room is handsomely and luxuriantly fitted up with sofas, tempting lounges, and soft easy-chairs, whereon a sybarite might repose; also a green-baized table, on which were quill pens, ink-stands, paper-cutters, pen handles, and all the materials of literary work. Lighting a fragrant Havana and handing one to the reporter, who laid it aside till after the interview was got through with, Mr. Sweeny took a seat. We took our notebook and the interview commenced, Mr. Sweeny submitting to our examination and answering all our questions in the freest and kindest manner. The interview was as follows:—

#### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

REPORTER—I desire, Mr. Sweeny, to ascertain for the HERALD what policy, if any, has been decided on by the Democratic party in the State, especially in reference to the recovered municipal powers of this city.

SWEENY—No policy has been finally decided on as yet. There has been only an informal interchange of views among the leading men of the State, but the plan of municipal reconstruction has



not yet been marked out. The victory of the last election was a substantial conquest—we have captured all the strongholds of the enemy, with all their materials of war, especially in this city. It was quietly accomplished by a “still hunt,” and the full measure of the success has scarcely been realized yet by either side. We may be said to have captured everything but the standards of the enemy; those would be of little use to us. It gives us a great opportunity for a long lease of power in the State, and to lay a substantial foundation for the Democratic party of the country. It is a great opportunity, but it is at the same time a great responsibility. This responsibility we must look straight in the face and keep in anxious regard. We will be held justly accountable for the government in the city and the State, and all our acts must be capable of the closest scrutiny and investigation. The Republican press have already served us with notice of trial.

COUNCIL FOR CONSULTATION CALLED BY GOVERNOR  
HOFFMAN, TO MEET AT ALBANY, NOVEMBER 30.

REPORTER—How is it proposed to meet this responsibility?

SWEENEY—On this point there is a very clear understanding in the party. All our movements are to be made deliberately and on the fullest consideration. The success which has been achieved and the consequences belong to the whole party.

Governor Hoffman, from his position, is the official head of the party. He is a man of broad and liberal views, and will be actuated by no narrow policy. He represents and belongs to the whole State, and will consult no special interest or locality in regard to his policy. I learn that he has already issued invitations to leading men of the State to meet at Albany on the 30th inst., for consultation.

REPORTER—Can you give me an idea as to who are invited to this grand pow-wow?

SWEENEY—Not by authority. But I have learned enough to know that they will be such men as ex-Governor Seymour, Lieutenant-Governor Beach, William Cassidy, of the *Argus*, Sanford E. Church or some representative of him, Samuel J. Tilden, Henry C. Murphy, Comptroller Allen, Attorney-General Champlain, Secretary of State Nelson, Treasurer Bristol, Engineer Richmond, composing the State officers; Grand Sachem Tweed, Mayor Hall, and Comptroller Connolly, from our city; Warren and others, of Buffalo; Augustus Schell and others equally prominent from different parts of the State. I have given names enough to indicate the character of the men who will be called into the council, and the broad ground which will be covered.

REPORTER—Will not such a meeting create jealousies, especially among the legislative representatives.

SWEENEY—No. To invite all the members of the Legislature would make a convention or mass meeting, and those gentlemen will be duly consulted and have their influence recognized when they come to Albany. The preliminary meeting must necessarily be limited and enlarged from time to time. Besides, the Democratic party was never in such harmonious accord, free from jealousies and disputed claims for leadership, as at the present time.

THE DIVISIONS AND INTRIGUES IN THE STATE—TILDEN'S POSITION.

REPORTER—I am surprised to hear you say that. I thought the country Democracy were hostile to the growing power of Tammany Hall—especially that Tilden was intriguing to produce this condition of things.

SWEENEY—That is all humbug. Tammany Hall asks nothing from the State. . . . It has all the patronage and power that it desires in and on Manhattan Island. I think Tilden got an idea last summer that war was to be made on him, but there was no foundation for it. He don't stand in the way of any one down here. He is a safe and prudent as well as an experienced counsellor in political matters, and, so far as I can see, has no selfish object to accomplish in the position of chairman of the State Committee. Tammany Hall elected him a delegate to the last State Convention, and sustained his re-election to the head of the

State Committee. At the last Convention we sent a delegation of first-class men—such as Hall, O’Gorman, Law, Cox, Magnus Gross, Schell, Tilden, and the like—equal to those from any other section of the State. We determined not to control any nomination, and divided our votes so that all the disputed nominations were made by the votes of the country. There was the warmest feeling of kindness and friendship on the part of the country members towards our delegates. I know this, because I was there. Why should it be otherwise? The present organization of the Democracy in the city of New York has built up the party with such power that it has invigorated the whole State. A few years ago the city only gave from 15,000 to 20,000 majority. We now give from 45,000 to 70,000 majority. This result has required great work, opposed as we have been here by the Federal patronage, Custom-house, Post-office, and Internal Revenue departments; the power and patronage of the Republican Commissioners, Police, Excise, Fire, Health, Croton Department, and the other Radical devices of partisan management. Our vote fell off in November, because of the reaction from the Presidential struggle of last year and the absence of any exciting issue. Besides, we had to vote ten tickets, and this led to so much delay that many left the polls without voting, and many others could not get the opportunity to vote at all. Our

percentage of falling off is not much greater than that of the State at large. To do what we did in bringing out our vote, getting it registered and then polled, required constant and very great as well as expensive labor. At our great ratification meeting we had 50,000 live Democrats in procession. This was no small work to accomplish.

WHO CARRIED THE STATE AT THE LAST ELECTION.

REPORTER—But you know, Mr. Sweeny, the State Committee claim to have carried the State.

SWEENY—I don't know anything of the kind. The State Committee did its part of the work very well in sending out documents and asking statistical information, and what may be called the reading, writing, and ciphering part of the work; but they did not send out a dollar to organize the State. What was done in providing the sinews of war was the work of Tammany Hall alone. I will not say how much was done in this direction, because that is a private affair; but the candidates in doubtful districts know that Tammany Hall did its duty fully and with open hand to the State as well as the city.

STATE POLICY, APPOINTMENTS, AND MEASURES.

REPORTER—What will be the general features of the policy of the State in regard to appointments?

SWEENY—In my judgment, the Democracy of the

State will be thoroughly satisfied with the results. There will be no divisions growing out of the distribution of patronage. The effort will be to secure the best men in the points of qualifications and political claims. The appointments of superintendents of the bank and insurance departments will be of great importance, because they affect such vast and delicate interests. The Health Office is the greatest in the State in emolument and responsibility; but of course a first-class physician, not politician, is needed there. The harbor masters and port wardens will be liberally distributed. We have so much patronage of our own that we can afford to practise self-denial here and be very liberal to the State—that is to say, we will not claim what our vote entitles us to. We shall not persecute the Governor with our applications.

EFFECT OF THE ADOPTION OF THE JUDICIARY  
ARTICLE.

REPORTER—Will not the adoption of the Judiciary amendment increase the difficulties in the State?

SWEENEY—Not necessarily. It may be the best thing that could have happened to the party. One great objection to it was the power given to the Legislature to locate the judges in General Terms. It would have given a Republican Legislature power to send a lot of carpet-bagging political Judges to any part of the State to exercise the judicial power

for political ends, and it is not difficult to see the result. Now, however, with a Democratic Legislature, this danger is not to be apprehended. Judicial officers will be allowed to exercise their functions in the districts for which they are elected. For the new Court of Appeals it seems probable that Justices Grover, Lott, and Earl, the present Democratic members of the existing court, will be nominated; and if elected, the Governor will have the power to fill their places by appointment on the commission court provided for. There will be a very general feeling in the State to nominate Judge Allen for the new court. He would have preferred to have been nominated for the Court of Appeals at the last Convention, but deferred his desires to the wishes of the State that he should accept the renomination for Comptroller. If he is nominated and elected to the Court of Appeals, the Governor will fill the vacancy in the Comptrollership. I think Samuel J. Tilden will also be nominated if he will take it. I don't know whether Judge Comstock will be a candidate. He is entitled to most of the credit of carrying the judicial amendment. I think Judge Leonard of this city will be also presented. The danger will be in getting out the vote at the election. If we should be defeated, the Court of Appeals will be Republican for the next fourteen years. The article adopted requires that the election of the new Judges shall be held between April



and June. It will probably be fixed for the same time as the town elections; and in our city we will have some exciting issue to be voted on at the same time, probably the election of Excise Commissioners, which will bring out the vote.

REPORTER—How about the State measures at the approaching session of the Legislature?

SWEENY—They will be pretty much as indicated in the Governor's message of last year. We have now the opportunity of converting Democratic doctrines into practical principles of government—against special legislation and jobs of all kinds and descriptions, in favor of economy in all branches of the government, the improvement of the canals and the lowering of the tolls and charges, a uniform election law for all parts of the State, and the restoration of municipal rights to the cities. These will be prominent ideas. A prompt performance of legislative business and an early adjournment will also be urged. There are other important measures under consideration, which I do not feel at liberty to mention. The pressure from all parts of the State will be to run the Legislature clear and clean from taint or stain. If this is not successful, the veto power will be freely exercised. All legitimate efforts will be directed to reduce taxation, as a conspicuous result of Democratic administration. I think one of the first acts will be to repeal the action of last winter approving the fif-



teenth amendment. It is conceded on both sides by the leading men that any State can withdraw its assent before the measure becomes fixed by the concurrence of the required number of the States.

#### THE NEGRO QUESTION.

REPORTER—Is it proposed to keep up the negro agitation by this course ?

SWEENEY—The fifteenth amendment goes beyond the negro. It proposes, as I understand it, to absorb the whole subject of suffrage, by which Congress will be enabled to disfranchise the whites while enlarging the area of negro domination. The Radicals will give it the broadest construction, and can convert Congress into a power as absolute in controlling popular suffrage as that of Louis Napoleon in the first days of the last Empire. The negro question is assuming an entirely new attitude. At the South our Democratic friends are fast coming into political alliance with the negro voters. The negroes prefer to sustain the men of the soil, with whom and their homes and interests they have been identified in the past, rather than the broken-down carpet-bag adventurers of the North, who want their votes for the sake of office. In our State the negro question is greatly exaggerated in importance. By the census of 1855 the total number of colored males over twenty-one years of age was about eleven thousand ; by the census of 1865 it

was five hundred less, showing a slow but steady decrease. The total number of negroes now debarred from voting by the property qualification requirement is only about thirty-five hundred in the whole State, of whom 1,200 are to be found in our city. The larger part of the negroes now voting in our city vote the Democratic ticket, especially in the Eighth ward and that vicinity; and they will be all as accessible to us as to the Republicans. Our boys understand how to get them. It would not, therefore, have been a great calamity to us if we had all voted to remove the property qualification. It seems an anomalous state of things to contend that the negro is the inferior of the white man, and yet in a community in which he must live to refuse him equal rights. We ought to get rid of the negro agitation. It hurts more than the negro vote could injure us. It introduces a moral issue—a sentiment of justice—and presents the captivating cry of universal suffrage, which carries away many votes, especially among the Germans, and prevents the legitimate political questions of the country from having their just weight before the people. It seems plain that it will be an unfortunate day for the negro when he is divested of the sympathy and support of the moral and benevolent agitators of the country, who make his welfare the permanent issue of the day, and is left to take care of himself on equal terms with a superior race.

INTRIGUES IN REGARD TO THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL  
NOMINATION.

REPORTER—Before coming down to the municipal question I would like to make one or two inquiries—for instance, about the intrigues said to be on foot for the next Democratic nomination for the Presidency.

SWEENEY—There is no intrigue that I am aware of, and I don't think there will be any from this State. When the time comes the man will be indicated by his services, capacity, and popular claims. Intrigue has not been successful in Democratic national Conventions. No candidate has been nominated by pre-arrangement since the time of Martin Van Buren, of the old Regency, except in the case of Buchanan; and he would not have succeeded if it had not been for the contest between the "Hards and Softs" of this State, each side sending delegates. The result was that New York had no voice in the national councils, and each side of the contestants made its bargain with the Buchanan men for admission to seats. Both sides were admitted on equal terms, and the vote of New York nominated Buchanan. But for this condition of affairs William L. Marcy would no doubt have been nominated and elected, and the country saved from Buchanan and Rebellion.

THE POSITION OF JUDGE CHASE TOWARD THE PARTY.

REPORTER—Does it not appear probable that Chase will be nominated in the next Democratic Convention?

SWEENEY—Of course no one can say what will be the influences controlling then. But let us look at probabilities. When the last Convention met we had not yet recovered from the consequences of the attitude of many of our leading men in regard to the war. Besides, a false and unnecessary financial issue was sprung on the party. We were not strong enough to win with the Democratic vote; but it was possible and practicable to break down the Republican party by making an alliance. Judge Chase was the man for that time, and we of the city of New York were strongly for him. It appeared to us as plain as demonstration that it was the time for a compromise which would be accepted by the whole country, and that Chase was the man to compromise on. But when the next Convention meets things will be different. Then the Republican party will be broken down by Grant, and the Democratic party will need and demand a representative Democrat, and not a Republican ally. I should not be surprised to see Judge Chase the Republican candidate for the Presidency at the next election.

REPORTER—How do you make that out?

SWEENEY—Why, the Republican party will then be somewhat in the same necessity that the Democracy were on the 4th of July, 1868. The Radicals will need an alliance with the Conservative branch of the party. Chase is not only a statesman in the

best sense of the term, but he is a politician also, and knows how to pave the way to success in his own party. He knows men and their motives well. He will not be injured by the popular strength which he exhibited when his name was considered on the Democratic side of the house. And he was not, in fact, compromised in our Convention. He put neither his hand nor seal to anything committing him to us. He was represented by many who claimed to have authority from him ; but there was no written power of attorney, and there is no record against him.

A CARTE DE VISITE OF COLFAX.

REPORTER—How about Colfax's prospects ?

SWEENEY—Well, he would seem to have been placed in the line of succession, but I don't think he has a strong hold on the country. He is a mere politician, and not a statesman. He is a genial, bland, and enterprising politician, a good-natured, hand-shaking, clever fellow. But, to give an illustration, if he were a doctor he would be the most popular one in town ; he would smile his way into the sick-room and talk his way out, but his prescriptions would not amount to anything. The ladies would run after him, and the children would cry for him, but no physician of knowledge and experience would ever think of asking him to a consultation on a serious or doubtful case.

## THE "POLICY" OF GRANT.

REPORTER—What do you understand to be the policy of Grant?

SWEENEY—When Grant is in doubt his trump card is "do nothing." This is his policy. Thus he has allowed the Alabama question to subside into temporary oblivion, and thus with all the opportunities he has had to make affirmative issues. This is natural. The capacity to decide great political questions is not a matter of intuition. Grant had neither knowledge, habits of thought, nor discipline to grapple with great political questions before he entered on the Presidency; consequently he is not able to tell, from his own convictions, what is right or wrong in any political problem presented or advice given to him. As soon as a question broadens and threatens danger, he ties up the papers and puts them out of the way as an annoyance to be avoided. He does not want to hear anything more about it. He is, withal, a proud man rather than an egotist. He brought about him mediocre men, because he did not care to be measured, and he did not wish to get into water so deep that he could not wade ashore. He expressed the wish of his soul when he said he looked forward as eagerly as a schoolboy for his holiday to the end of his term. He wants peace. He would like to smoke cigars, drive fast horses, and go junketing for the balance of his days. I

think he is entitled to do so for his share in putting down the rebellion. He means to make no mistakes which can be prevented by masterly inactivity. He might have had a brilliant administration if he had been willing to sink himself to a nominal position. The Republican party was built up by its political leaders, and they should have been allowed to administer the estate which they had secured. Suppose he had called such men into his Cabinet as Sumner, Stanton, Ben Wade, Greeley, Sherman, Ben Butler, and Charles A. Dana, who were representative men of the success achieved. He would have had the most pronounced administration of later years, and the Republican party would have pursued its mission to the end. Another trouble with Grant is that he entered on the Presidency as owner, instead of trustee, of his party; and he bestows his appointments as personal gifts, instead of rewards for party services, or swaps them off for pecuniary benefits received.

#### THE ALABAMA QUESTION.

REPORTER—Then you consider the Alabama question out of the way at present, and all the issues likely to be with the Democracy.

SWEENEY—It seems to me that if we do well with our trial in the State of New York, the future of the Democracy is assured. The Alabama question will live, and the people will be ripe for it whenever



it is vigorously pressed. If Great Britain had, in defiance of our protest, openly and boldly fitted out the Alabama, and furnished her to the rebels to prey on our commerce, a claim to indemnity for the consequences would not be disputed by any nation of the world. What England failed to do boldly she did clandestinely, connivingly, and fraudulently, while pretending to be with our government at the time. England is responsible for all the consequences, and sooner or later will be compelled to meet them. The Alabama not only destroyed the vessels she met, but she drove our shipping from the seas, because of the danger which was threatened, and Great Britain reaped the profit. Before the war our shipping was greater than that of England; now the latter has a merchant marine five times the tonnage of ours, and we have ceased to be a maritime power. This question and these consequences cannot be allowed to sleep or die out. We will have a revival of the old spirit of "fifty-four forty or fight," which grew out of the North-western boundary, and which elected James K. Polk. There are many other questions.

THE ISSUES OF THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION  
—CUBA AND MEXICO.

REPORTER—Such as what?

SWEENEY—Cuba and Mexico, as well as the Fenian and Alabama issues with England, will enter



into the next election. There is a prospect of filibusterism entering somewhat largely into the next Presidential campaign. Then the tariff. We will be as near free-trade as the necessities of the Government will permit. The negro question will be out of the way then. So, too, in regard to the payment of the war debt, as we will have resumed specie payments, or have that result within our grasp. We will have a capital issue on the question of taxation. The expenses of the government the year before the war were about eighty-five millions ; it is difficult to know what they are now, but for the half year up to January 1, 1869, they were nearly five hundred and seventy-six millions, or at the rate of over a thousand millions a year, although the appropriations for 1869 were nominally about one hundred and sixty-two millions. The extravagances, defalcations, and imbecility of the Administration will give us issues enough. The army appropriation was about thirty-four millions, and the expenditures on that account were probably double that sum. Governor Hoffman's position in regard to the equality of native and adopted citizens, and the duty of protection to all who have sworn allegiance to our Government against the world, will also be a prominent Democratic principle. There will be questions enough, but I have not time to go into them now.

PLAIN, UNVARNISHED TALE OF "THE ERIE BILL"  
UNFOLDED.

REPORTER—While on general subjects, how about the "Erie Bill," that the Republican press make so much fuss about?

SWEENEY—There never was a subject so misrepresented and misunderstood. The Republican press have lied about it with a purpose. The bill in question, which is just as much a New York Central Railroad as it is an Erie bill, is in precise words a copy of the law adopted by the Republican Legislatures of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, and approved by the Republican Governors of those States. It was passed by the Legislature in this State when both branches were Republican. The vote, on its passage in the Senate, was nearly unanimous. It was laid on the table in the Assembly for about a month, for objections, but none came. The bill provides that a certain number of directors shall go out each year instead of the whole board; but it does not interfere with the power of the courts to correct abuses, nor does it tie up legislation. It can be repealed at any time. It has not been of any practical value to either the Erie or Central road. The Erie stockholders, at their election in October last, unanimously elected an entire board without availing themselves of the advantages of the law. The bill was introduced into our Legislature purely as

a defensive measure against the action in the Pennsylvania Legislature looking to the control of the Erie road in the interest of that State and subordinate to the Pennsylvania Central, by which the trade of the West would be diverted to Philadelphia from New York. The Pennsylvania Legislature, having passed a bill precisely like that under consideration for the protection of the Pennsylvania Central, authorized that company to make a large foreign loan, which it leaked out was intended to buy up the Erie stock for the purpose I have indicated. Governor Hoffman held on to the bill for objections, but not a single stockholder remonstrated against it. Those who did confer with him urged him to sign the bill, as being calculated to settle the wrangling and issuing of stock to control the road, and likely to work to the advantage of the stockholders. At all events it was an experiment, and if it did not work well it could be repealed at any time. Since its passage the stock has been registered, and its capital is on a permanent basis. If the Governor had not signed the bill, and the result had been that the Pennsylvania Central obtained control of the Erie road, he would have been condemned on all hands for the undue and improper exercise of the veto power. This is the plain unvarnished tale of "the Erie bill." Why don't the Republican press pitch into Governor Geary, of Pennsylvania, and the Republican Gover-

nors of the States I have named, for having signed the same bill, word for word? The bill has thus far been of no advantage to either the Central or Erie road, and does no harm that I can see, because the vote for the new Erie Board of Directors was unanimous, as I have stated. It had one advantage—it arrested the schemes of the Pennsylvania Central road to obtain the control of the Erie and divert trade to Pennsylvania.

#### MUNICIPAL RECONSTRUCTION.

REPORTER—To return to the more immediate question, from which I have wandered so far, what do you think will be the scheme for the reorganization of the municipal government of New York?

SWEENY—The measures have not yet been matured. The engrossing duties of the late and approaching election have absorbed the time of those who will be instrumental in preparing the plan. So far as Tammany Hall is concerned, she means to proceed deliberately and with moderation. The Democratic party is pledged to restore local self-government. This is a pledge which must be redeemed. The commissions were inventions to rob the people of their rights for partisan ends, and they will, of course, be wiped out if the party is true to itself.

REPORTER—How will that be done?

SWEENY—It is very simple in principle. Let New York and Brooklyn have their own police

government through their own representatives, and responsible for their own expenditures ; let our Fire Department (Brooklyn has its own) be placed under a board composed in like manner, or under the direction of the Police Department ; have locally appointed officers for the Health and Excise boards and the Croton Aqueduct Department, and the work is done.

REPORTER—How is it proposed to officer the departments, —by election or appointment ; and if by the latter, by what authority ?

SWEENEY—We can never have a consolidated government unless we have a responsible head. Our city has been as much divided in this respect as the States of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut by their separate sovereignties. We are willing to accept the trust of government, and to be held as a party responsible for its administration. The Mayor should have the power to appoint and remove all heads of departments except the finance and law—the Comptroller and Counsel to the Corporation—who, for obvious reasons, should continue to be elective. This power should be subject to the approval of some representative body. We had a trial under the charter of 1847 of electing all the important officers of the city government. Then we elected a street commissioner, a commissioner of repairs and supplies, a commissioner of lamps and gas, and all other departments

and bureaus; the result was that we had a collection of petty sovereignties, each independent of the other, and all spending money without any accountability anywhere. These officers were all nominated in convention by combinations of politicians, and the best men were not successful. We were soon glad to have this scheme repealed. Then we had the ten governors of the Almshouse; all will remember their career, and realize the salutary change to appointments by local authority through which the Board of Charities and Correction was secured. When the authority is devolved upon the Mayor of appointing prominent officials, the eyes of the whole community are on him, and he must, from regard to his own character and that of his office, make the best appointments practicable. So, too, when complaints are made which he has the power to redress, he will be compelled to apply the remedy or take the consequences in public condemnation. We have had two striking illustrations of the healthful results of appointments by local authority during the past year. First, in the Commissioners of the Board of Education. They are all first-class men, and have discharged their duties with ability and conscientious fidelity. At the rate that the old Commissioners were progressing, the expenses of common-school education in this city would have been nearly \$4,000,000 for the ensuing year. They were over \$3,000,000 last year. The

new Commissioners find that they can get along with a little over \$2,000,000. So, too, with the new Tax Commissioners appointed by local authority. They are accomplishing great reforms in correcting old abuses and long-continued favoritisms, which will soon be made manifest to the public.

THE ARGUMENT AND EXAMPLE IN BROOKLYN.

REPORTER—But in Brooklyn they appear to be against commissions and appointed boards?

SWEENEY—I don't think there would have been any objection to the Water Board of Brooklyn if they had managed their affairs so as to give satisfaction to the people of that city. They have not been fortunate in this respect. The Democratic objection to commissions has been to those appointed at Albany, imposed, as it were, by foreign authority, and not responsible to the constituency to be affected. There is no objection, in principle, to a commission appointed by locally elected representatives, and subject to removal by the same authority for maladministration.

THE DANGER OF BREAKING DOWN IN NEW YORK.

REPORTER—Don't you think there is great danger of all this power breaking down the Democratic party in this city?

SWEENEY—Of course there is every danger, if the responsibility is not appreciated, and the power wisely exercised. In a mere party point of view,



we have made more by the police and excise powers continuing in the hands of the Republicans, and administered with the hot-headed zeal, fanaticism, and despotic tyranny of John A. Kennedy, than if we had the power and responsibility in our hands. But we are bound to accept the situation and do our best. The Police Department, executive directed by such a man as John Jourdan or Judge Dowling as Superintendent, will be a hundred-fold more effective in preventing and detecting crime than under John A. Kennedy's rule. Kennedy is a very clever fellow, personally and socially; but in executing power he is the veriest tyrant that ever lived. He knows this, and rather glories in the fact. Besides, the police will be made more efficient than ever; and the petty system of prying through shutters and crawling through chimney-flues to detect the smell of liquor will cease to be the chief business of the police force.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COST OF GOVERNMENT—WHO  
IS RESPONSIBLE?

REPORTER—How do you expect to make manifest the advantages of the proposed change?

SWEENEY—Acts are the best interpreters of intentions. We intend to show by practical results the advantages to the people. For instance, we mean to present our tax levy early in the session, invite the closest scrutiny, and submit to the lowest fig-



ures. We will take the expenses of last year, under the rule of Republican Commissioners, and compare them with those of this year, under Democratic government and local sovereignty. Here are the expenses of the city and county government on the back of this tax-bill, which you might as well copy, as it contains the information in a condensed form.

EXPENSES OF CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT FOR 1869.

For State purposes.....	\$2,672,820 18
For county purposes, viz. :—	
For the support of the Metro-	
politan Police .....	\$2,727,365 07
Board of Health .....	110,186 15
City College .....	125,000 00
For interest on county debt..	1,375,981 00
Various public institutions...	283,688 75
For general purposes .....	3,171,386 66
	<hr/>
	\$7,793,607 63
Less amount of county reve-	
nues, not otherwise appro-	
priated .....	80,000 00
	<hr/>
	\$7,713,607 63
For city purposes, viz. :—	
For Board of Education.....	\$3,150,000 00
For free schools, otherwise ..	219,398 00
For Commissioners of Cen-	
tral Park.....	285,000 00
For Public Charities and Cor-	
rection.....	1,213,000 00
For Fire Department.....	907,940 00
For interest on city debt....	1,429,945 86
For redemption of debt.....	202,420 69
For general purposes .....	5,815,403 38
	<hr/>
	\$13,223,108 53

Less amount of revenues of the Corporation not other- wise appropriated by law..	\$2,300,000 00	
	<hr/>	\$10,923,108 53
To supply deficiencies .....		603,377 79
		<hr/>
Total to be raised by tax.....	\$12,912,914 13	

If any one will trouble himself to make the addition, he will find of this total that the expenses over which the city and county governments have no control, amount to about fourteen millions—including the State tax, Police, Health, Fire, Education, Charities and Correction, interest on debt, Central Park, &c. The interest on the county debt, it will be seen, is over \$1,300,000. The larger part of this debt was incurred in consequence of the war, for bounties, supporting families of soldiers, &c. The items included in the tax for police and the several commissions are not embraced in the tax law passed by the Legislature, but the commissions have virtually had authority under general laws to include what they think proper. All these figures we expect to reduce, including the items for general purposes of the city and county.

#### THE EXCISE QUESTION—WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH IT?

REPORTER—Have not you got a very dangerous power in the Excise question? Will not the grog shops force unlicensed free rum as a city institution?

SWEENEY—No; I think not. Look at the sub-

ject practically. The Democratic party and the city of New York have only temporary power over the question. If the power is abused and the moral sense of the State is aroused at what they consider paramount evils, the rural districts will make the issue, and elect a Legislature which will impose greater restrictions than ever. There are 7,000 liquor dealers in the city of New York. This is a great power; but at the same time it is a great interest to risk. I think the liquor dealers, as a matter of protection against future legislative aggression, and for self-preservation, will be in favor of conservative and moderate measures. The greatest objection to the present Excise law has arisen from the despotic and mean manner of its execution. The moral sense of all communities is against the open sale of liquor during the hours of worship on the Sabbath, and in favor of a reasonable period at night to close the traffic; and I think the liquor dealers will see that it is to their interests to pay reasonable license fees, by which irresponsible parties will be kept out of the trade. The right of the liquor dealer is subject to all other rights, but equal to every other. The Republicans are cornered on this Excise question; the Democratic party means to hold its position, but at the same time be true to all the interests of government.

## THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

REPORTER—You had in the last election a new element—that of the “labor unions.” Don’t you think that this labor movement is the rock ahead for both political parties?

SWEENEY—I think not, for what seem to me to be obvious reasons. The Democratic party is sound on all the questions affecting the laboring interests. The Eight Hour law is accepted now by both political parties. Eight hours to work, eight hours to rest, and eight hours for social, moral, and intellectual improvement and enjoyment have become an established maxim. In regard to the conspiracy law, one of the first acts of the approaching Legislature will be to repeal this odious and absurd law. This will be so much credit to Democratic account. The Republicans refused to repeal it; the Democrats will make it one of their first acts. It is absurd that while the men who work cannot combine for mutual protection, the men who do not work can and do combine for every purpose under heaven. The gold and stock brokers, those lilies of the golden valley, have their boards; the insurance men have their association of underwriters; the banks have their clearing-house; the grain dealers their exchange; the railroad men their conventions. All these are associations for mutual protection. In fact, capital is organized in every field of speculation and enterprise, and yet when labor combines for its protection against the combina-

tions of capital it is a conspiracy and the members are liable to be indicted. This absurdity will be speedily eradicated. Capital must make up its mind that it has to treat in future with associated labor and communities of interest. It is no longer combined capital against the individual. Submission to strikes will, after a while, be a necessity, and the excesses, if any, in the claims made for the time being must be left to the after good sense and sober second thought of the unions. Long-resisted strikes lead to great evils, and are as injurious to capital as they are demoralizing to the men. Capital and labor are mutually dependent on each other, and when their relations are more firmly established under the new order of things they will harmonize more thoroughly. The capitalists, the aristocracy of wealth, and the bondholders who enjoy immunity from taxation are in the Republican party. Equal taxation of all capital and property is alike the principle of the Democratic party and of the laboring interests. The Democratic party are the natural allies and helpmates of the laborers of the country. If any one thinks that the labor unionists are not reflecting men, and do not understand themselves and their rights and duties, let him go to a union meeting where a question is to be discussed, and listen to the straightforward talk and hard-headed sense of the debaters. Of course there is danger of the labor movement being

wrecked by being converted into a political machine. There are demagogues among them, as there are among all other associations of men, and there are selfish leaders, who would like to ride into power on the strength of the labor movement. There was an illustration, and a very ridiculous one, in the candidacy of Nelson W. Young for Coroner at the late election. Holding inquests on dead men's bodies had as much to do with the labor interests as keeping a pound for stray animals. I don't think we are likely to see a repetition of such an absurd spectacle.

#### THE POWER OF THE "MACHINE."

REPORTER—What is the secret of the immense strength of Tammany Hall, and the certainty with which it brings its forces into action?

SWEENY—It is chiefly from the completeness of its organization and the thoroughness of its discipline. General McCook, of Ohio, remarked at the last time I saw him, that, next to the Roman army under Cæsar, the organization of Tammany Hall was the most thoroughly disciplined body that the world has seen. We have good discipline. Our plan is very simple. Each ward of the city is represented in general committee by delegates elected each year for the ward at large, according to its vote. This is the central or county organization, and consists of between 300 and 400 representatives.

This body is charged with the general party management during the year, such as calling public meetings, nominating conventions and primary elections. This general committee is composed of experienced politicians—generally the same men from year to year—the changes being chiefly in the wards which do not hold their own, where the defeated delegates give way to their successful competitors. Then we have a ward organization for each ward, consisting of delegates from each election district, who are in permanent session in the wards. These district representatives may be considered the captains, who marshal and lead into action the rank and file of the Democratic host in this city. These local leaders have great experience, and know all the voters in their districts, and how to get them out. Then, again, we are harmonious in Tammany Hall. Our nominations are made after the fullest consultation with the leaders throughout the city, and the organization moves with the precision of a well-regulated machine. Great vigilance is exercised to keep up its discipline. The outside organizations don't amount to anything—they are ephemeral, self-constituted, and generally spring up over night in the interest of a few broken-down politicians, rejected by Tammany Hall, and exist for the purpose of "striking" the candidates. Besides, Tammany Hall is the organization of the party in regular succession, and has the patronage



and prestige on its side, and has acquired a national fame for its vigorous fidelity to the Union during the entire period of the war.

REPORTER—I have taxed your patience considerably. I have but one other question to ask, and I shall have finished, and that is—Do you not find the position of political leader in this city a very troublesome and thankless office?

SWEENEY—I am glad you have asked me that question, because it gives me the opportunity to set myself right on the subject. I am not, and never claimed to be, a leader. If there is any one entitled to that designation among the Democracy of our city, it is Senator Tweed. He is Chairman of the General Committee, and Grand Sachem of the Tammany Society. He has remarkable executive ability, and is a recognized leader. Mayor Hall, Comptroller Connolly, and others I might name, are more leaders than I am. I am a sort of adviser. I try to harmonize the interests of the party, and endeavor to secure good nominations and sound principles, as I understand them. But I do not aspire to the position of a leader. I am simply a passenger in the ship, with the privilege of going ashore if I do not like its management or its course.

At this point our reporter thought he had notes enough to transcribe, and sufficient information collated, and, intimating as much to Mr. Sweeney, who seemed exhaustless on the subject of politics,

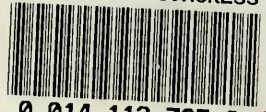


measures, and men, begged to conclude the interview. A few moments more and the work of transcribing was commenced, and the result of our reporter's interview with Peter Bismarck Sweeny is now before the readers of the HERALD.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 112 767 6

